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THE MAYOR'S VETO MESSAGE

—AND—

THE REPLY OF THE

Board of Public Instruction.

ALBANY, N. Y., NOVEMBER, 1886.

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Board of Public Instruction.

ALBANY, N. Y., NOVEMBER, 1886.

ALBANY, N. Y., *November* 15, 1886.
MAYOR'S OFFICE.

To the Secretary of the Board of Public Instruction:

DEAR SIR—In accordance with the provision of the city charter, I return to you the annual school budget which the Board of Public Instruction has prepared, and which has been sent me by the Honorable the Common Council. I have examined the several items of the said budget, and, as permitted by the charter, I hereby notify you that I object to certain appropriations therein, and deem it my duty to reduce the amount of certain other items.

The tax rate in the city of Albany is very high. If we conduct our city government economically, we can reduce this rate. I am satisfied the people desire this, and will watch with eagerness your efforts and my efforts to that end. No proper interest need suffer because of this economy. Where we have been indulging in extravagant and unnecessary expenditures, we may well retrench. The free school system, within its legitimate limitations, is one of the glories of our country, but we are not called upon, nor have we a right, even for this good purpose, to expend

the money of the people carelessly and lavishly. Albany has been extremely liberal in appropriations for its free schools, and is entitled to exercise economy for a year or two without failing in its obligations to public educational interests.

I assume that each individual member of the Board will assist me in reducing public expenditures this year. With the handing in of my memorandum respecting the items of the budget, my responsibility ceases and yours begins. I may say that this spirit of retrenchment is expected of every department of the city government.

ITEMS.	Amounts asked in School Budget.	Amount allowed by Mayor.
Teachers' salary	$115,500 00	$105,000 00
New School No. 7, under provision of chapter 48, Laws 1886	17,661 43	17,661 43
Repairs and heaters	14,500 00	8,000 00
Fuel	8,500 00	3,000 00
Janitors' salaries	9,000 00	8,500 00
Supplies	2,000 00	2,000 00
Superintendent of Schools	1,200 00	1,200 00
Superintendent of Buildings	1,500 00	Nothing.
Clerk hire	720 00	Nothing.
Text-books and stationary	1,700 00	1,700 00
Gas	600 00	600 00
Insurance	800 00	Nothing.
Water rates	400 00	Nothing.
Printing and advertising	2,000 00	1,500 00
School furniture	1,400 00	Nothing.
Miscellaneous expenses	700 00	Nothing.
School apparatus	150 00	Nothing.
Rent of School No. 3	400 00	400 00
Settlement suit, Blake *v.* City	681 47	681 47
To purchase lot and erect a new building for School No. 3, three rooms thereof at least to be finished and furnished from this amount, the remaining rooms to be finished from moneys to be provided hereafter when needed,	24,000 00	Nothing.
Total	$203,412 90	$150,242 90

Teachers' Salaries.

Amount asked, $115,500 ; amount allowed, $105,000.

I have reduced this item to $105,000. The appropriation for the salaries of teachers, and the registered number of scholars, have been as follows for the last four years :

YEAR.	Teachers' Salaries Appropriated.	Registered Scholars.
1882	$94,000 00	13,984
1883	95,000 00	13,914
1884	98,000 00	13,708
1885	98,000 00	13,720
1886	107,000 00	13,410

The average attendance in 1885 was 9,740.

The average attendance in 1886 was 9,660.

Here is a falling off of 80 scholars. The average number of attendance compared to the number of teachers, in 1885, was 40 to one. The average last year, 1886, was 38 to one. Two hundred and fifty teachers were employed in 1885. This year there were 253, an increase of three, notwithstanding that there has been a falling off of 310 scholars in the registered number, and in the attendance a decrease of 80. A less number of scholars would suggest a less number of teachers. The total salary list has gone steadily up, while the registered number of scholars has gone steadily down. This looks like an inverse ratio which the people will not commend.

For Repairs and Heaters.

Amount asked, $14,500 ; amount allowed, $8,000.

I believe this item should be reduced. Through the courtesy of the Secretary I have obtained a detailed statement of the amounts needed for each school. I have not had time to go personally to each school, nor indeed to examine its requirements in the way of repairs, and while I believe, from what I hear, that many of the amounts are unnecessarily large, I hesitate to act on the in ufficient information I possess. However, I am quite clear as to one item, which calls for an appropriation of $6,500 for altering the school in Trinity Place, known as No. 14. This is not properly a "repairs." It is rebuilding, and should have appeared as such in the budget. I had the Street Commissioner, a very competent and careful official, examine this school, and he reports it in a perfectly good condition, in his opinion needing no

repairs. It may be that the arrangement of the rooms is not just satisfactory to some teachers, but it seems to me that any re arrangement can wait on the city's ability to pay for it.

Fuel.

Amount asked, $8,500 ; amount allowed, $3,000.

I cannot approve of appropriating this large sum for coal at this time. Your coal is stored and paid for at this moment up to November, 1887. If you do not buy another pound or spend another penny for fuel, you will have all you require until that date. The $3,000 allowed will purchase enough to supply you through the remaining two months until the last day of December, 1887. On the next day, the first day of January, 1888, the budget following will be available. I would not undertake to cut down this item if I did not feel sure of my position on the matter. Your appropriation for coal last year was only $8,000, and yet you expended $14,933.94. This, as you explain, was to pay for two years' supply, for 1885–6 and for 1886–7. I do not mention this to criticize your management, but to have our citizens draw the very natural inference that if you should happen to run short of a coal supply for a few days a year from next fall, you evidently have some source from which you could draw the money necessary to keep your heaters running. I understand, of course, that it is sometimes wise to buy large quantities of an article when it can be procured at a low price, but the theory of our city government is to let each year take care of itself.

Janitors' Salaries.

Amount asked, $9,000 ; amount allowed, $8.500.

Last year was expended for Janitors' salaries $8,419.16. There is no need of spending more this year. If an increase for School No. 7 is necessary, it can be saved from the unfairly high salaries paid some of the other janitors. You can easily save six hundred dollars per year for this item in the High School expenses. This will leave $720, and spacious house accommodations for the janitor's salary. I will undertake to find a man who will run the boilers and perform all the duties of janitor for his house rent and $720 a year, and who will at the same time shovel and save the coal.

I think the system of employing janitors is wrong. There should be found in each of the schools, some strong, lusty lad, who

would perform this work for a moderate stipend, enough to clothe him at least. The teaching now is all in the direction of charity and educational alms. The boys should be taught independence and manliness, and the reliance which comes from self support. The boy who has courage and mettle enough to do this work will make the kind of a man to succeed in life. There is nothing degrading in this labor. It will gladden the heart and win the friendship of every thoughtful and honest witness of his pluck and spirit.

Superintendent of Buildings.

Amount asked, $1,500; amount allowed, Nothing.

I cannot approve of this item for two reasons: First, it is not authorized by law, and in my opinion the employment of this officer since 1872 has not been strictly within your powers; I have the written opinion of the corporation counsel to this effect; second, it is not necessary to have such an officer. When the school board consisted of four members—I think that was the number constituting the Board before the Law of 1866—they charged themselves with the duty of looking after the repairs to the school buildings, and employed no Superintendent. Now, that there are twelve capable commissioners, the duty of keeping an eye over the several buildings is intrusted to a salaried officer. The commissioners in the other departments charge themselves with this duty.

Clerk Hire.

Amount asked, $720; amount allowed, Nothing.

The objections to the preceding item govern me in disapproving of this. The law makes the Superintendent of Schools the Secretary of the Board, and contemplates that he will perform the clerical duties of that position. No provision has been made by law for a clerk, and it is a dangerous practice for commissions to create new offices. If there is, as I should judge there well might be, too much clerical work for even the very efficient Secretary of your Board, then why not impress into your service some of the young men and women who are in the High School. Surely the city is entitled to their services, and I have no doubt their assistance will be cheerfully given.

Insurance.

Amount asked, $800; amount allowed, Nothing.

I object to this item. The title and ownership of the school buildings rest in the city of Albany. It is the policy of the municipality to insure its own property.

Water Rates.

Amount asked, $400; amount allowed, Nothing.

My objection to this item is, that it is not necessary for the city to re-imburse itself for water expenses in this way. The city owns the water-works and should not exact payment for the use of water from any of its departments.

Printing and Advertising.

Amount asked, $2,000; amount allowed, $1,500.

I have cut this down to $1,500. Last year when the schools were interested in our city anniversary, there was an extra draft on this fund, yet even then you only expended $1,625. Economy for the coming year will make $1,500 an ample appropriation for printing and advertising. Expenses which are not absolutely necessary we should avoid.

School Furniture.

Amount asked, $1,400; amount allowed, Nothing.

I object to this appropriation. This item is not intended to purchase furniture now necessary, but to gradually replace the old kind of seats and desks with new and improved styles. Let this go, pray, for one year. If a desk or a seat breaks down, repair it. I look forward to the day when we can afford to improve both our school-houses and their furniture.

Miscellaneous Expenses.

Amount asked, $700; amount allowed, Nothing.

Chapter 444 of the Laws of 1866 — the act creating your Board — distinctly declares it to be your duty in certifying to the Common Council the amount of money which will be required for school purposes, to specify "the several purposes for which the same will be required." An indefinite appropriation should not be granted. All ordinary expenditures should come within

one or the other of the twenty distinct items of the budget, and which are definite in purposes.

School Apparatus.

Amount asked, $150; amount allowed, Nothing.

This is not a very large appropriation, but it seems to me that with the annual appropriations you have had in other years for this purpose, you can do very well without new or different apparatus for one year. Or you can take the amount out of the literature fund given by the State and which last year amounted to over $1,800.

New School for No. 3

Amount asked, $24,000; amount allowed, Nothing.

I object to the item of $24.000 for a new school in the place of No. 3. The present school-house known as No. 3. situated at No. 6 Watervliet avenue, is not adequate to the demand upon it. There are two rooms measuring 14½ feet by 38 feet and nine feet in height. There are 35 scholars in each room, and these measurements allow less than 16 square feet of floor room for each child. This is an amount too small in a room with a low ceiling and heated with stoves. The school has two daily sessions, one set of scholars attending in the morning, and another set in the afternoon. In the western end of the city it is said. and I think truly, that five hundred children would avail themselves of school privileges, if convenient accommodations were afforded. By convenient I particularly mean proximate schools. There was a time when a walk of a mile or two miles was no obstacle in obtaining school privileges. To-day the school-house must stand just around the corner. This year, as I have already pointed out, it is necessary for us to economize. At the first opportunity a new school must be erected in the west end. I believe that the pressing demand for room may be met by a re-arrangement of the scholars in the several schools in the western part of the city, letting the larger ones attend the schools at the greatest distance, and in the event of this not proving satisfactory, more room may be had by building an addition to No. 12, at an expense not exceeding $5,000. It is urged that we should erect costly and large schools, that we should "build for the future." It is well to remember now and then that the tax-payers have to pay for the present, and, alas, for the past. I would not say all this if I were not impressed with its importance. The moral effect of a marked exercise of

economy by your department handling, as it does more money than any other branch of our government. will be very great. I think for the present we can find accommodations for all the school children who have applied, without building a new school. The city Engineer and Surveyor, at my request, has examined all the western portion of the city, and upon his report I base my suggestions. There are vacant seats in these schools as follows :

School No. 21	60 seats.
School No. 18	80 seats.
School No. 22	60 seats.
School No. 7	86 seats.
School No. 24	100 seats.
School No. 11	68 seats.
School No. 6	76 seats.
School No. 10	36 seats.

Total vacant seats—566.

These schools are none of them too far for the attendance of children over 12 years of age.

Here are accommodations for ten per cent more than the estimated applications. An addition might be made to either School No. 21 or No. 12. There is ample room to build an addition to the latter. If the enlargement referred to was made, and School No. 22 were filled with the scholars now attending No. 12, who properly belong to No. 22, School No. 21 could temporarily be devoted to primary scholars exclusively, and abundance of room obtained for the surplus scholars from No. 3. The expense of this addition should easily come within $5,000. Let me say here that when a committee of prominent citizens from the west end called upon me in reference to the proposed new school, one of them, fully alive to the financial condition of our city, remarked that in the event of my approving of the item, $10,000 would be sufficient.

Yours,

JOHN BOYD THACHER,

Mayor.

Reply to the Veto Message of the Mayor.

To the Citizens of Albany:

The publicity given by the Mayor to his objections to several items of the school budget, and the strictures made upon the course of the Board of Public Instruction in its management of the schools, demand as public a reply to those objections, as well as a vindication of that course.

The Mayor glories in the free school system of this country; we assure him that he may especially glory in the public schools of this city. They are a credit to the city, and a source of well founded pride to its citizens.

No municipal department comes so close to the people as the department of education. The people are jealous of their schools and they insist, as is their right, that their schools shall be wisely, skilfully and efficiently managed. A proper respect for this just demand compels this reply to the message of the Mayor.

Let us take up and consider the items objected to by the Mayor in the order in which they appear in the message.

The first is the estimate for the teacher's salaries. For the year 1886, the amount raised was $107,000; for 1887, the estimate is $115,500. The increase of $8,500 is accounted for as follows:

A deficiency in the amount received from the State, which could not be foreseen and which has embarassed every city in the State in like manner	$3,500
Additional teachers in new School No. 7 and in Nos. 20, 22, 10 and 2	3,500
Add for contingencies, in order that there may be no deficiency	1,500
Total increase	$8,500

The Mayor objects to any increase on the ground that there has been a falling off in the number of registered pupils since 1882. The Mayor was naturally led to this conclusion by the reported figures. Had he read the contexts of the reports he would have learned that the registered number is not the proper

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standard of comparison, because that number was much too large prior to 1883, owing to duplicated enrollments caused by transfers from school to school during the year, which swelled the total improperly. This has been guarded against since; hence came the diminished total.

The more reliable index is the average attendance. This item for the years cited by the Mayor has been as follows:

1882	9,350
1883	9,059
1884	9,452
1885	9,740
1886	9,660

These figures show a net increase of 310.

That the decrease of eighty in 1886 was owing to temporary causes is made evident by the fact that the attendance of last month exceeded that of the same month in 1885 by 109.

Allowing forty scholars to a teacher, a liberal figure on average attendance, the increase of 310 calls for not less than eight (8) more teachers.

In 1882 the total number of teachers was 233, in 1886 this number was 253, an increase of twenty. We have already shown that eight more were required by the increased average attendance.

The additional twelve were required for these very urgent reasons.

First—A proper regard for the health of the primary scholars.

Second—An equally proper regard for their progress in school work.

Third—The increased attendance in higher grades.

That the classes in many primary rooms were too large, has been admitted and deplored for years. The crowded condition of these school rooms has been a constant threat to health. Often eighty children were crowded into one unventilated, badly-lighted and over-heated room, creating a foul atmosphere wholly unfit for young beings to breathe. There were but two remedies for this; to turn some of the children into the street, or to provide more class room and more teachers. The board chose the latter alternative.

That no teacher can properly progress such large classes even in primary grades no one will deny.

Again, our citizens are showing their approval of the work of our schools by keeping their children in school much longer than

formerly. This has increased the numbers in the higher grades, and as advanced classes are necessarily smaller than those of lower grades, has also called for more teachers.

The Board has, therefore, in order to meet these needs, slightly increased the number of teachers, though not to the extent it would have been justified in doing.

To show the watchfulness of the Board over expenditure for salaries, it is only necessary to say that it has adopted the practice of transferring teachers to fill vacancies, instead of making new appointments, whenever it is shown that the attendance of a school has diminished so as to justify such transfer.

Finally, the Board has engaged all the teachers until September, 1887. A reduction of $10,000 in the estimate would create a deficiency, unless a great reduction in rate of pay of the whole number of teachers be made for the four months succeeding that date.

Repairs and Heaters.

In 1886, this item was $14,000. In 1887, it is $14,500. Of this amount $6,500 is intended for the alteration of School No. 14. This is the part objected to by the Mayor. The Committee on Hygiene says in its last report of School No. 14:

"School No. 14, with a seating capacity of 984, one of our largest schools, has substantial walls, and is a good school building; but the arrangement of rooms is so faulty as to necessitate remodeling the entire interior. Twelve rooms are imperfectly lighted, the halls are small, and the heating and ventilation very poor. A central hall running through each floor would give rooms of good size on either side, furnished with equal and sufficient light. Your committee urge very strongly upon the Board the necessity of this remodeling, as, at a comparatively small outlay, one of the school buildings most open to criticism could be made one of the most serviceable."

An inspection of this building will convince any one that its narrow halls and stairways, and the fact that one-fourth of the over 900 pupils must pass through two rooms to reach the stairways, are a standing menace to life and limb, and in case of a panic, this faulty arrangement would open the way to a terrible disaster. The improvement suggested is not "to please some teachers," but is necessary to the safety and health of the children.

Coal.

Amount raised in 1886	$8,000
Amount now asked	8,500

The increase of $500 is to provide for a probable advance in prices. The Mayor proposes that a very large proportion of the coal be bought in midwinter. Such a course, this year, would have increased the cost of the supply not less than $1,000.

Every prudent person fills his coal bins in the summer time, when the price is lowest. The Board has always done this, and is sure that its plan is the only proper one. It is fortified in this opinion by the practice of every State and city department.

The Mayor's misunderstanding of the amount paid for coal last year arose from not distinguishing between the school year established by State law, and extending from September to September, and the city's financial year, extending from January to January. The supply for 1885–86 was paid for in September, 1885, and supply for 1886–87 was paid for in August, 1886, both payments being made within the same school year, but in different financial years.

The supply of each season was paid for out of its own appropriation.

Janitors' salaries in 1886	$8,800
" " in 1887	9,000
Increase due to new No. 7	200

The Mayor proposes to cut down the cost of the High School by $600. We now pay $600, with apartments rent free, to the janitor. This covers all expenses of cleaning and caring for, not only the very large building used daily by over 700 people, but also the extensive sidewalks and streets. We pay also an engineer $720 a year to attend the steam heating apparatus. This man is a skillful mechanic, and keeps the entire apparatus in repair, and not only this, but he also does all the slight repairs in carpentry throughout the building. In these ways hundreds of dollars have been saved. The total cost of the care of this large building is $1,320.

Now comparisons are proverbially odious. But it is only fair to the Board to show that the comparative cost of the care of the High School is low.

The city building costs for the same items, as is shown in the city budget of 1886 :

For janitor's salary (apartments rent free)	$900
For assistant janitor's salary	300
For cleaning	800
Total	$2,000

Every citizen knows that the city building is no larger than the High School, and is used by far fewer persons. It would appear from this comparison that the latter is cared for at a moderate cost.

Again, the city hall is a somewhat larger building and, we admit, should cost more for its care; but the total cost is so much greater as to be convincing proof of the moderation of the school authorities. The items for the care of city hall, found in the last city budget, are:

Salaries	$3,000
Cleaning	1,000
	$4,000

This is paid by the city; we are informed that the county pays a like amount for the same purposes, making a total cost of $8,000. And laborers clean off the snow at so much per day!

Should the city hall cost six times as much as the High School for care and cleaning?

It cannot be that the Mayor is serious in his proposition to dismiss all janitors and call upon the children to do their work.

Such a plan is wholly impracticable. Large furnaces, steam boilers and other valuable appliances can be intrusted with safety to adults only. But even if such a plan were practicable, it would not be a proper one. The public schools were established, and are supported, by the people of the State. Attendance on them is a right and not a privilege. The public schools are common in the sense that they are open and free to all. Every rent-payer contributes to the support of the schools as well as every tax-payer; and, therefore, every citizen is entitled to the tuition of his children, not as an alms or a charity, but as a right. Whose children then shall be called upon to sweep and dust and make fires? Can

such distinctions be made without creating the classes to prevent whose creation is one of the chief ends of our institutions? It would surely be very unwise to attempt the plan suggested.

Superintendent of Buildings $1,500

The Mayor proposes to strike out this item, and to abolish all special superintendence of the twenty-four buildings under the care of this Board.

Prior to 1866, this work was performed by the Secretary, who was not employed at all in supervising school work proper. This practice was continued until 1869, when, owing to the death of Superintendent Haswell, a special Supervisor of Repairs was first employed. In 1872, when the number of buildings had increased from fifteen to twenty-four, and the attendance from 4,000 to 7,000, and when new buildings were in course of erection, and the Secretary's work had increased so as to confine him to office work, a Superintendent of Buildings was first appointed to serve continuously. At first his salary was paid from the repair fund, to which it was properly chargeable. But the Board was reluctant to appear to be hiding an expenditure, and subsequently the amount was placed in the annual budget as a separate item.

This practice has been followed year after year, and the item has been approved by every Mayor until this year. This Board can see no good reason for abandoning a prudent and an economical policy which has saved the city many thousands of dollars during the past fourteen years. The suggestion that the members of the Board should personally supervise the constantly arising repairs of twenty-four buildings subjected to the wear and tear of a daily attendance of 10,000 children is wholly impracticable. The members of the Board receive no salaries, and now devote a large share of their time to legislative and administrative duties. They cannot be expected to neglect their private affairs and stand over masons, carpenters and plumbers. And if they did so, the purpose would not be effected. Special training and experience are essential to effective supervision. Do the members of the Fire Board personally supervise repairs? Their efficient Chief Engineer gives a good share of his time to these matters. Do the Park Commissioners or the Water Board look after such work in person? They cannot be reasonably asked to do so. This Board might return to the original practice of paying for supervision from the repair fund, and thus avoid any legal technicalities; but such a course does not seem straightforward.

The Board is, therefore, ready, if it is deemed necessary, to apply for remedial legislation, both in respect to this position and that of the clerk in the office of the Secretary. It is thought that with the assistance of the Mayor and the Common Council, such legislation can readily be obtained.

Clerk-hire $720

The origin of this item is similar to that of the preceding one. In 1878, on the occurrence of a vacancy in the office of Superintendent of Schools, the Board, satisfied that supervision of educational work by committees of laymen was ineffective in so large a system, determined to select a professional educator to take charge of the schools, and appointed the present incumbent, Mr. Charles W. Cole, who had been for ten years a teacher and had made a special study of public school management. Mr. Cole entered upon his complex and varied duties with vigor and enthusiasm; but soon found himself crippled in his efforts by the confining work at the Secretary's desk. The Board, believing that the time of a supervising officer was thrown away in keeping accounts, handing out chalk, brooms and pails, and similar ministerial labor, provided a clerk at a very moderate salary to perform these offices. The effect of this action was immediate. The Superintendent, no longer burdened with these details, was enabled to devote a large share of his time to the higher functions of his office, and to develop and apply a system of superintendence that rapidly made itself felt throughout the schools. The course of study was revised so as to accord with the most approved plans in vogue. Systematic and regular examinations superseded the irregular and intermittent tests of committees; the best methods of teaching were presented at teachers' meetings in so practical a way as to insure their adoption in the schools; the standard of scholarship was raised; the work of the scholars was unified, and a spirit of enthusiasm and emulation was infused among teachers and taught.

In the department of primary teaching alone the efforts of Mr. Cole were crowned with such remarkable success that, had he accomplished nothing else, the Board feels that the city has been repaid ten times ten fold the expense of relieving him somewhat from clerical labor. This is not all. Mr. Cole has made himself felt for good in every department from the lowest primary to the High School, and the Board, feeling just pride in the high reputation our public schools enjoy in the State and nation, is glad to

place itself on record as ascribing a good share of that high reputation to the earnest. intelligent and judicious efforts of the superintendent of schools.

The proposition of the Mayor to use High School pupils as clerks cannot be considered for a moment. Were it proper from any point of view to call on High School pupils to perform the duties of a clerk, their lack of experience would confine the superintendent to his office in order to direct the work of constantly changing assistants to such an extent, that he would be better off without any help.

Insurance $800

If it is to be the policy of the city to insure all its own buildings, this Board does not desire to be singular; although it has thought a moderate amount of insurance sufficient to meet the probable amount of loss on buildings so well watched as the schools, a wise investment.

Water rates $400

The Board heartily accords with the sentiments of the Mayor in respect to this item. It was inserted because the water board insisted that we must pay these rates, or go without water.

Printing and advertising $2,000

The amount allowed by the Mayor, $1,500, can, of course, be made to suffice by going without some important appliances for school work; but it was considered unsafe to make so close a limit. We expended $1,625 in the last school year, all of which was for school purposes proper. The Mayor is misinformed concerning the bi-centennial printing. The citizens' committee paid all the printing bills except one of twenty dollars, which this Board assumed because the printed matter was used in the schools for regular exercises, as well as for the celebration. Next year some changes in the course of study and the regulations may call for additional printing. It was thought wise, therefor, to insert the amount above stated — $2,000.

School furniture $1,400

The Mayor allows nothing for this purpose. In support of this item, the following passage from the last report of the Committee on Hygiene is quoted:

"The condition of the desks and the seats in many of the schools demand early attention. Incalculable injury may be

done to young and growing bodies by forcing them into unnatural positions. In Schools Nos. 6, 14, 23 and 21, the desks are worn out in many of the rooms, and should be replaced with the modern single desks.

"In fact, an investigation shows fifty-five school rooms in all needing such improvement. In the primary and grammar school buildings only thirty rooms have the single desks. In school No. 13, scholars of the ninth grade are cramped into seats designed for the seventh grade. The desks and seats in several of these schools. No. 11 especially, need repairing. The outlay in the latter case will be slight and the comfort of the pupils largely increased."

From the same report it appears that nearly 2,000 new desks are really needed. The amount asked for will purchase about 350. This is certainly deliberate and conservative action.

Miscellaneous expenses $700

To this account are charged such items as postage, expressage, freight, cartage, telephone rent, messenger service, drawing exhibition and rent of public halls, and all other items whose exact amount in detail cannot be foreseen. The amount needed is determined by the experience of past years. The Mayor objects to the item as not definite. It is surely as definite as "street contingents" in the city budget, or as "incidental expenses" in the estimate of the corporation counsel.

The city has a large contingent fund in the excise moneys, to which miscellaneous items may be charged. We have no other fund from which "miscellaneous expenses" can be paid. In past years this item was considered sufficiently definite by Mayors reviewing our estimates.

School apparatus $150

This is a modest item, which enables the Board to keep the valuable apparatus used in the schools in good repair, and to add a little year by year. Every year or two the Regents of the University give us a like sum for these purposes provided we raise as much as they give. The other moneys received from the Regents are devoted to the payment of teacher's salaries.

School No. 3 ..... $24,000

The crying need of a new building at the West End has been set forth by the Board for several years. This year it is the opinion of the Board that action can no longer with justice be

delayed. The Board has entirely trustworthy information that over five hundred fifty children of school age in that district, are deprived of school privileges by the want of accommodation, and that this condition cannot be relieved by any makeshift policy, but only by the erection of a new building.

The Mayor admits that there are five hundred children without school accommodation ; but he proposes to postpone the erection of a building and to place these children, or what is the same thing, other children now in school, in certain seats in other buildings; or to build an addition to School No. 12, or School No. 21.

The Mayor obtained his information as to vacant seats by deputing two gentlemen to visit the schools and count the empty seats. More exact information could have been obtained with far less trouble by sending to the office of the Board for the official figures, as will be seen from the following table, by which it appears that although the Mayor's total is only forty-three (43) too large, there are many wide discrepancies which affect the problem :

SCHOOL.	Vacant Seats reported to Mayor.	Vacant Seats reported by Principals.
No. 21	60	32
No. 18	80	38
No. 22	60	90
No. 7	86	71
No. 24	100	67
No. 11	68	68
No. 6	76	49
No. 10	36	108
	566	523

The Mayor's proposition is to remove enough of the larger pupils from No. 21, and No. 12, to other schools to afford room for the expectant five hundred fifty. This is a more complicated scheme than it appears at first glance. All will admit that these larger pupils must be sent to schools where they can enter proper grades. Schools Nos. 10, 18 and 24 are primaries, having few scholars above ten years of age, and no classes above the fifth year. They have no empty class-rooms ; but have vacant seats scattered throughout the buildings. These schools cannot

receive any of the larger pupils. Their vacant seats (213 in number) must, therefore, be deducted from the total, leaving 310.

All who know the exact location of No. 6, on Second street below Lark, and No. 7, on Clinton avenue opposite Swan street, or No. 11 on Madison avenue near Lark street, will see that pupils of Nos. 12 and 21 cannot be reasonably asked to walk such great distances from their homes. The conditions are far different in the city from the rural districts where, although in good weather pupils may walk a mile or more to school, they have horses and wagons at their command on stormy days or in severe weather. City school buildings must of necessity be located so as to accommodate the largest possible number; they must follow the trend of population. The "school-house just around the corner" is the necessary outcome of concentration of population, as are many other appliances of modern civilization.

The vacant seats of Nos. 6, 7 and 11 are of no practical use in the problem we are considering. They also must be deducted from the total, which leaves 122 empty seats in Nos. 21 and 22, scattered through ten or twelve rooms of varying grades in which these children to be transferred may or may not fit. And supposing they did fit in, there would still remain over four hundred children unprovided for.

An addition to No. 12 would be a good thing; but the Principal of that school assures us that if he had four more schoolrooms, they would be instantly filled from his immediate neighborhood. How would that help the children living near West Albany?

The Principal of No. 21 has a list of 105 children living east of Ontario street, awaiting seats. Clearly such an addition to No. 21 as could be built for $5,000, the amount suggested by the Mayor, would give no room for the 200 little ones living from a half to three-quarters of a mile farther west.

In fact, there is but one solution to the problem: a new building. If this cannot be built this year, these children must wait until the city can afford the outlay. The Board has given this question careful examination; it is as fully alive as any other body of citizens to the propriety of administering all the affairs of the city economically; but it can see no economy in refusing to provide this large number of children with educational advantages to which they are entitled by law, by right, and by the spirit of our institutions. The people pay the bills and the people are entitled to the benefits.

We claim that there are no public institutions that contribute as much to the prosperity of the community as good public schools. They attract people seeking permanent homes. They influence favorably the establishment of new branches of industry. Our intelligent mechanics and workingmen will not long remain in a locality where there are not ample and efficient school facilities.

It behooves us, therefore, in the direct interests of the city, to furnish these facilities, with a wise, prudent and truly economical liberality.

OREN E. WILSON,
President of Board of Public Instruction.

PETER J. FLINN, *Chairman.*
CHAS. H. GAUS,
JAMES M. RUSO,
Special Committee on the Budget.

ALBANY, *November* 22, 1886.

NOTE.—The Mayor's veto was sustained by the Board, November 22nd, on the following items :

Repairs and heaters, reduced by	$6,500 00
Superintendent of Buildings stricken out on legal grounds	1,500 00
Clerk hire stricken out on legal grounds	720 00
Water rates stricken out	400 00
Printing and advertising reduced by	500 00
	$9,620 00

The veto of the following items was overruled by the Board :

Teachers' salaries	$10,000 00
Fuel	5,500 00
Janitors' salaries	500 00
Insurance	800 00
School furniture	1,400 00
Miscellaneous expenses	700 00
School apparatus	150 00
New school building	24,000 00
	$43,050 00

The budget as first made by the Board amounted to,	$203,412 90
The budget as finally adopted, amounted to	193,792 90

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